

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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COUNTRY USSR

REPORT

SUBJECT Soviet Intelligence Policy toward
Visa Applicants and Visitors to the USSR

DATE DISTR. 30 July 1953

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REFERENCES

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CORRECTION

An Information Report with the above heading was issued on 16 July 1953. Sentence 2, paragraph 2 should read: "The NKVD considered all foreigners, hostile or friendly, not from the standpoint of security risks, but from the standpoint of whether or not they could be recruited for Soviet political or military intelligence. The NKVD was not actually afraid"

25 YEAR
RE-REVIEW

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STATE	x	ARMY	x	NAVY	x	AIR	x	FBI		AEC									
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COUNTRY	USSR	REPORT	<input type="text"/>	25X1
SUBJECT	Soviet Intelligence Policy toward Visa Applicants and Visitors to the USSR	DATE DISTR.	16 July 1953	
DATE OF INFO.	<input type="text"/>	NO. OF PAGES	3	
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1. The admittance or non-admittance of foreigners seeking entry into the USSR was decided from the intelligence rather than the counterespionage point of view. Applicants seeking a Soviet visa came under the jurisdiction of the Foreign Section (INO) of the Secret Police (NKVD) and the Military Intelligence (formerly the IV Division of the General Staff). The Counterintelligence Section (KRO) of the Secret Police reviewed visa applications as a precautionary measure after they were approved by the authority of the INO or the Military Intelligence. In other words, the guiding consideration for the granting of a visa to a foreigner was that foreigner's susceptibility for recruitment to a Soviet intelligence assignment. Those who were obviously impossible to recruit were denied visas. Those who appeared to be possible candidates for Soviet intelligence assignments were admitted and subjected to a very long and careful examination.
2. There was sometimes a conflict between the NKID¹ and the NKVD because the NKVD disapproved of certain persons whom the NKID wished to bring to Moscow. The NKVD considered all foreigners, hostile and friendly, security risks. However, the NKVD was not actually afraid of foreign spies in Moscow if they were admitted legally as foreign diplomats or visitors, since as foreigners they were isolated from the local population and were easily kept under surveillance.

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4. [redacted] the activities of an organization known as the OVIR (Otdel Vis i Registratsii Inostrantsy). Formally this organization was part of the Moscow Militia Directorate, but actually its function was to study foreigners admitted to the Soviet Union for the purpose of establishing their fitness for intelligence work. 25X1
5. In 1940 or 1941 OVIR was in charge of clearing admittances to territories newly acquired by the USSR. These territories, although annexed to the USSR, were still considered foreign territory and everyone going there was required to get a propusk (pass). 25X1
[redacted] Its offices were located at Bolshoy Cherkasskiy Pereulok, which was in the center of the NKVD area of Lubyanka. The officials wore the uniform of the Soviet Militia.
6. [redacted] the study of a foreigner was started by OVIR immediately upon reception of the application for a Soviet visa at any Soviet embassy abroad. The office of the chief of the Consular Service or of the Consul General informed the Second Secretary of the Embassy, who ex officio was a member of the intelligence service, and through appropriate channels started collecting information about the applicant. [redacted] this was done mostly through the information section of the local Communist Party, although the Soviet Embassy also had files where information on persons of interest to the USSR was gathered. The results of the first investigations were sent to Moscow through the Visa Section of the NKVD to the OVIR NKVD. These findings were evidently immediately sent to the INO and the Military Intelligence. After the INO and Military Intelligence arrived at a decision, it was reported to a special commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Komissiya po Vyezdu). Then, if INO and Military Intelligence wanted the applicant to come to the USSR, they instructed the proper embassy to grant the entry visa. 25X1
7. After the visa was granted, the study of the foreigner was continued. Then, however, the emphasis was on the personal characteristics of the visitor rather than upon his background, as was the case in the preliminary investigation. Information on the personal characteristics of the visitor was then gathered from the files of the information section of the Soviet Embassy and from reports of investigators assigned as a team to study the visitor. The type of information which was of interest was good and bad personality traits, strength or weakness of character, susceptibility to women, drinking, money, and the visitor's political sympathies. 25X1

8. [redacted]

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9. This policy of studying applicants for visas for possible intelligence agent recruitment was also carried on outside of the USSR where foreigners came in contact with Soviet organizations or persons. For example,

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[redacted] guests attending diplomatic parties given [redacted] by the Soviets were screened for possible use as agents by the USSR. [redacted] a list of diplomats who attended these parties [redacted]

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[redacted] was actually the beginning of a "big enterprise". [redacted] in the case of many of the persons whose names appeared on the list, nothing was ever done. However, many of the other persons whose names appeared on the list were approached by the secret police if there was evidence that they were strongly anti-Fascist, pro-Soviet, or otherwise susceptible.

10.

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11.

1. [redacted] Comment. People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs.

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